Daily Report

Latin America

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ECLA Members Issue Economic Declaration

PY231455 Madrid EFE in Spanish 2348 GMT 22 Apr 88

[Text] Rio de Janeiro, 22 Apr (EFE)—The development of Latin American and Caribbean countries continues to be hindered by an adverse international economic situation. This is stated in a declaration released here today by representatives of the Latin American ECLA member countries during a technical meeting.

The declaration was issued today at the end of the meeting, which was held in addition to the three discussion committees of the 22d ECLA session.

The Latin American representatives said that "the structural nature of the crisis, as well as its persistence and depth, jeopardizes the sustained development of their countries, causes their productive capacity to increasingly deteriorate, aggravates old socioeconomic difficulties, and widens the differences between social groups."

The document goes on to say that "within this context, the Latin American countries are struggling with great difficulty to restore or perfect democratic processes."

The declaration notes that forecasts on the future of the international economic situation predict that this situation will prevail for the next few years and might even worsen.

It also states that international developments have been particularly adverse for Latin America and that the foreign debt cannot be honored under the present situation without sustained economic development.

The document then says that the countries of the area cannot subordinate their development to the fulfillment of financial commitments "contracted during an international situation quite different from the current one."

It states that "the servicing of the foreign debt has jeopardized the implementation of the economic policy by restricting maneuvering room and forcing governments to focus their attention on pressing temporary problems to the detriment of a long-term plan for the development of their economies."

The document issued by the Latin American ECLA member countries delegates recalls that during the 1982-87 period the net transfer of resources abroad in the region amounted to some $150 billion. It then notes that "in addition to this are the large sums of income lost due to the drop experienced through the terms of trade."

The declaration adds that the internal effort to adjust economies to a situation that at first appeared transitory has resulted in societies where the attempts to consolidate and strengthen the democratic process coexist with a weakening of the capacity to grow.

According to the document, these societies are also affected by a low investment rate, persistent inflation, and increasingly negative social conditions.

The document notes that in order to overcome the crisis it is necessary to do away with the many external and internal restrictions that result from the international context and the current way in which the Latin American and Caribbean economies function, to which end "the implementation of a new international economic order cannot be postponed."

The declaration points out that the starting point is the resolution of the foreign debt problem, not only with actions specific to that purpose, but also others designed to reorganize the international monetary and financial system and stimulate world trade.

The document notes the need to establish a multilateral trade system that will guarantee expansion as well as growing participation by the developing countries in world trade.

It then says that the international monetary and financial system should be reorganized to allow a correction of the great imbalance affecting the world economies, which directly affects socioeconomic development.

The declaration adds that the Latin American and Caribbean countries are not responsible for the international situation, nor can they change it substantially; therefore, the region will have to assume an active role in order to change international economic relations.

The document concludes by saying that "as we confront the risks of recession, concentration of income, and authoritarianism, we declare our decision in favor of development, social equity, and democracy."

Cuba

Castro Meets With U.S. Cardinal O'Connor

FL2204145088 Havana Tele-Rebelde Network in Spanish 1100 GMT 22 Apr 88

[Text] Commander in Chief Fidel Castro, president of the Councils of State and Ministers, has met with His Eminence Cardinal John O'Connor from New York. Cardinal O'Connor visited Cuba to attend the activities marking the 200th birthday of Father Felix Varela Morales.

The significance of Father Felix Varela's life and work, the cardinal's impressions of his visit to Cuba, the relations developed with the U.S. Catholic Church, and other social matters of common interest were discussed during the meeting. The exchange between our commander in chief and Cardinal O'Connor took place in a friendly and cordial atmosphere.

Rodriguez Stops in Peru; Meets With Garcia

FL2204232788 Havana Radio Rebelde Network in Spanish 2300 GMT 22 Apr 88

[Text] Today Carlos Rafael Rodriguez, vice president of the Cuban Councils of State and Ministers, arrived in Lima, Peru, en route to Brazil where he will be a special guest at the festivities marking the 40th anniversary of the founding of ECLA.

Carlos Rafael met with Peruvian President Alan Garcia shortly after his arrival. Peruvian Foreign Minister Allan Wagner and Cuban Ambassador to Peru Francisco Ramos also participated in the meeting.

Justice Minister Meets With GDR Counterpart

FL2304131588 Havana Radio Progreso Network in Spanish 1100 GMT 23 Apr 88

[Text] Cuban Justice Minister Juan Escalona has held official talks in Berlin with Hans-Joachim Heusinger, his GDR counterpart. Escalona gave an overview of the Cuban judicial system and explained how each citizen's human rights are respected in Cuba.

The official continued on to Mozambique for a 5-day official visit in that country.

De la Madrid Receives Parliamentary Delegation

FL2304130388 Havana Radio Progreso Network in Spanish 1100 GMT 23 Apr 88

[Text] Yesterday President Miguel de la Madrid received the Cuban parliamentary delegation, which is on a working visit in Mexico. The high level of cooperation which characterizes the parliamentary relations between the two countries was reiterated during the meeting.

Members of Group To Observe Rights Named

FL2204234388 Havana Radio Rebelde Network in Spanish 2300 GMT 22 Apr 88

[Text] Colombia was chosen by the UN Human Rights Commission to be a member of the group of nations that will travel to our country to observe the situation of human rights.

This information was provided by the Colombian Foreign Ministry, which added that Colombia will represent the Latin American group that will visit Cuba. Nigeria will represent Africa. Socialist Europe will be represented by Bulgaria. The Philippines will represent Asia and Ireland will represent Western Europe.

CEMA Meeting on Fish Cultivation Ends

FL2304022488 Havana Television Service in Spanish 0000 GMT 23 Apr 88

[Text] The ninth meeting of the CEMA general convention of pisciculture has ended in Havana with the signing of a final protocol that approves the results obtained and the new forms of cooperation that were proposed.

The participants analyzed the exchange of expertise in the area of biotechnology in fish cultivation, diseases, nutrition, and genetics to develop hybrids of the different species that are exchanged among CEMA members.

In his closing remarks, Carlos Baez, director of the Aquiculture Enterprise, called for the enhancement of the next convention, especially in the area of technology, to more profitably produce commercial fresh-water fish.

Cuba last year produced more than 16,000 tons of fish from its waters in the interior of the country, as well as 26 million alevins.

Guadeloupe

Bomb Explosions Cause Heavy Damage, No Injuries

FL2204131088 Bonaire Trans World Radio in English 1130 GMT 22 Apr 88

[Text] Police in Guadeloupe are investigating two bomb explosions Wednesday night in Point-a-Pitre. The bombs caused heavy damage in two businesses but no injuries. No one has claimed responsibility for the explosions; however, in previous bombings there, responsibility had been claimed by Guadeloupe's pro-independence groups.

Haiti

Measures to Fight Contraband Smuggling Praised

FL2004221588 Port-au-Prince Radio Nationale in Creole 1300 GMT Apr 88

[Unattributed commentary]

[Text] It looks as if people are nowhere near finished babbling about the government's decision to put a stop to contraband in Haiti. It looks as if those who were getting rich at the expense of the national coffers, at the expense of the Haitian people, have already begun banding together in preparation to take stances in defense of the people. Which people? The people they have already pillaged.

There will be much talk claiming that this government decision is the reason for a rise in the cost of rice, oil, beans, and almost all staples. Some of these people may even send the Haitian people out into the streets, to the forefront, to protest this decision, these measures which should have been applied in Haiti long ago.

But what the smuggling leaders will never tell the Haitian people is that the existing system leaves the state penniless, and that when the government's pockets are empty it is difficult, even impossible, to implement a decent social policy. As long as the nation's coffers are empty, there will never be any money for such projects as building low-cost housing for the masses, hospitals, roads, and schools for the children of the poor. Projects for good, clean marketplaces will continue to remain mere ideas, relegated to the back of some desk drawer.

The moment it was announced that an antismuggling task force was going to be formed, many people in many sectors got mad. The anger was contagious and increased when the inspection brigades made up of customs officers and policemen began doing their jobs seriously at Mais Gate International Airport and provincial ports open to overseas trade.

For their part, the small vendors who are in the habit of going to Panama are going to get into the act too, joining up with the small vendors who are in the habit of going to Santo Domingo and are mad because the land border with the Dominican Republic has been closed to trade.

Although we realize it is hard on our masses, which have no other way to make a living, you must remember that it is an appropriate and temporary measure aimed at permitting the authorities to organize the customs offices along our borders in order to, first of all, prevent the entry of products the importation of which is prohibited by law, and, second, to allow the state to (?collect) its (?due) on the merchandise being imported. Even the Bible says: Give to Caeser that which is Caeser's due. Or, to put it another way: Give the state that which is its due.

Certain vexed or ill-intentioned individuals are implying that the formation of this task force is going to lead to the closing of all our provincial ports. How could this be true, since it is the government itself which advocates decentralization? How could the government wish to "do in" the provinces and take away their livelihood?

However, things will be done according to the law. False shipping manifestos, phony invoices, bribery to get things through customs—all these things are definitely over. The government is putting a stop to this machine, which was giving a few individuals a little monopoly, the country's money, while the Haitian Government became daily more impoverished.

What you should remember is that when you pay taxes, you are helping the government open schools, build hospitals, dig irrigation canals, and do what needs to be done in the country so that we can truly embark upon the path of development.

'Banditry' Around Port-au-Prince Worsens

FL2204215588 Port-au-Prince Radio Soleil Network in Creole 1100 GMT 22 Apr 88

[Excerpts] Acts of banditry are continuing worse than ever in Port-au-Prince and surrounding towns. [passage omitted]

There was a new case involving a driver who was held up on the airport road. Again, they took everything he had. He made the following statements:

[Begin recording] [Eugene] It was around 2 o'clock. [passage omitted] I was going to drop the passengers at their homes on the airport road.

On the way back, I encountered four individuals, three of whom were dressed in olive green. Of the three dressed in olive green, one had a pistol, another a machete, and the third a dagger. [passage omitted] They suspected I had more money in my pocket, and they said: Ah, I will kill you. If you don't give me the money, I will kill you. The guy brandished his knife in my face, ready to stab me. [passage omitted] When I saw that I could really be killed, I gave them the money. [passage omitted]

Then they said to me: Get out of here and don't look back. Lock your door and get out of here. And don't you dare look back, because if you do, I will shoot. I will show no mercy. [passage omitted]

[Reporter] After this happened, what did you do?

[Eugene] [Passage omitted] I went to the police post in Cite Soleil to make a report. I asked them if I should go to Fort Dimanche, but they said no. They said to go to the Criminal Investigations Department, so at around 11 o'clock I went to the Criminal Investigations Department to make my report.

The lieutenant there told me that this kind of thing had been going on in that area for a few days now, because the same thing had happened to a journalist. In addition to the journalist, it also happened to a sergeant from the Criminal Investigations Department. The sergeant shot two of them [words indistinct]. One of them was hit but didn't die. He is in the hospital, and when he is well, they are going to make him talk and tell them who else was involved.

So this is what these men are doing in the area. They are constantly doing this on the airport road. [end recording]

This citizen's name is Luc Eugene.

These acts of violence are not just occurring in the capital. In the provinces, too, there have been several murders in the past few days.

Yesterday, our correspondent in Les Cayes reported the case of Ledan Sanon, who was murdered by a commando Sunday night in (Benodo), near Cavaillon. [passage omitted] Also, the body of a mason was discovered in Miragoane the day before yesterday.

On Saturday night, a group of armed individuals shot and killed two citizens who were fixing a flat tire on the Thomazeau road.

[Port-au-Prince Radio Soleil Network in Creole at 1100 GMT on 21 April identifies the two victims as Celina Joseph and Bernard Joseph, adding: "They had a flat tire near a hen house owned by an industrialist named Brandt. After a few moments, a man armed with an Uzi and accompanied by another man appeared before them. According to the survivor's statement, they themselves were completely unarmed. The men, who were guarding the hen house, simply opened fire, cutting two of them down. The third person, Leopold Joseph, managed to escape."]

On Tuesday, people picked up the body of a young man on Ruelle Jeremie, off Lalue [another name for the main road from Port-au-Prince to Petion-Ville]. The body had been riddled with bullets by a group of individuals driving around in a car. Finally, the proprietor of a restaurant on Ruelle St Cyr was murdered last week.

Commando Murders Man; Cost of Land Protested

FL2204213588 Port-au-Prince Radio Soleil Network in Creole 1100 GMT 22 Apr 88

[Excerpts] Here is some news from Les Cayes: Last Sunday night, an armed commando killed Ledan Sanon in a place known as (Benodo), near Cavaillon. On Friday, 15 April, some 200 peasants from several communal sections in the Camp Perrin area massed in front of the tax office to ask that the cost of leasing public lands be reduced, and that they no longer be exploited, so that they can survive.

[Begin Les Cayes correspondent Dominique Dede recording] A report from Radyo Men Kontre's correspondent in Cavaillon shows that there is insecurity all over Haiti.

Sanon was killed by a commando armed to the teeth with Uzi's, picks, daggers, and revolvers on Sunday night at around 0200, in the place called (Benodo), which is in the first communal section of Cavaillon. This commando went to the house of a certain Benjamin Amazan, but luckily Amazan got away together with the other people in the house.

This same commando went to Sanon's house. The men surrounded the house, holding the people hostage, and then took Sanon away. They murdered him not far from the house. They gouged out his eyes and stabbed him in the head. The poor unfortunate died instantly. The police are currently investigating this matter, in an attempt to catch the murderers. [passage omitted]

On Friday, 15 April, a group of peasants from the first, second, and third communal sections of Camp Perrin demonstrated in front of the tax office to ask for reductions in the cost of leasing the public lands they farm. The land is too costly. They pay a lot of money and they don't see that anything is done for them with this money that they pay. They have no water with which to irrigate, and if it doesn't rain, they lose their harvests. There were some 250 peasants involved. [passage omitted] [end recording]

We must point out that Camp Perrin, where peasants demonstrated against exploitation on Friday, is an area where the population really wants a change. The people of this area had a bad experience during the 29 November incidents in Haiti. A citizen from Camp Perrin was murdered—shot and hacked to death— on Ruelle Vaillant. Another citizen, a woman, had an arm cut off and suffered machete wounds all over her body.

Jamaica

Seaga Announces Welfare, Social Services Plans

FL2204154888 Bridgetown CANA in English 1419 GMT 22 Apr 88

[By Paget de Freitas]

[Text] Kingston, Jamaica, April 22, CANA—Jamaica's Prime Minister Edward Seaga Thursday night announced plans for over J7 billion dollars (1 Jca dol; 18 cents U.S.) of spending on social services in the next five years as well as significant increases in welfare payments to the elderly and the poor.

Seaga's announcement came as he opened debate on his J8 billion dollar budget for the 1988/89 fiscal year, that included no new tax measures. The budget, of which J4.7

billion dollars will be recurrent spending and J3.3 billion dollars on the capital side, is up 16 per cent on the J6.9 billion dollars approved for the previous fiscal year.

Seaga in his speech—his last presentation before general elections this year—focused largely on social sector programmes which bore the brunt of years of economic austerity under adjustment with the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and the World Bank. But Seaga said that structural adjustment had been completed, with strong and positive movement in the economy over the past two years.

With the finances of the country having been put in order, the government was now able to tackle the problem of health, education, housing, social welfare, roads, water supply and sewage, Seaga said. We could not afford to start and run out of funds, the Jamaican leader said. We could never afford any false starts.

Under what he dubbed the social well-being programme, spending up to the 1992-93 fiscal year will cost J7.3 billion dollars. Of this amount J5,869.20 million dollars will be met by the Government of Jamaica through normal budget flows and from projected external cooperation programmes, Seaga said. The finance gap is projected at just under J1.5 billion dollars more than half of which Seaga expected to come from the buoyant growth in government revenues over the period, through the improved financial flows resulting from the adjustment process. External financing is expected to be mobilised for the rest.

The biggest spending under the plan is earmarked for education at more than J1.2 billion dollars, followed by health at J827 million dollars. Housing will see average annual investment of J400 million dollars.

Seaga also had significant news for those who depend on government welfare programmes. He announced that from July 1, permanently disabled persons as well as elderly poor—65 years in the case of men and 60 for women—with incomes of less than J50 dollars weekly, will get an 50 per cent increase in national insurance payments to J33 dollars. This will assist nearly 50,000 persons at a total cost of J33 million dollars this year, Seaga said. Additionally the poor and pregnant women who receive government food stamps will have their two-monthly payments increased by 10 dollars to 30 dollars this July and to 40 dollars next year. The beneficiaries total 380,000 elderly poor, indigent women with many children and lactating mothers with children up to the age of five years, the prime minister said.

Seaga also announced a 50 per cent increase in the allowances to students in training under the government's human employment training (Heart) programme. However, Seaga, who said that the major economic elements of his budget will be dealt with when he closes the debate in Parliament in two weeks time, said his programmes would not undermine the fiscal adjustment his government has carried out. We can contemplate to do all this only because we carefully and prudently managed our financial affairs so that after years of sacrifice we can now afford the cost, he declared. In fact, he said that overall public sector deficit this fiscal year was expected to be just 2.4 percent of gross domestic product, against two per cent for the year just ended.

On the central government estimates, the deficit is projected at less than one per cent, and Seaga said that could actually turn out to a surplus. Central government showed a surplus of point 03 per cent of GDP for 1987/88.

Last year the government reduced capital spending by J453 million dollars because of a major J490 million dollar shortfall in projected earnings from divestment of government entities. But growth in several areas pushed up revenue earnings by J296 million dollars more than projected, Seaga said.

Estimated revenue yield for this year continues to reflect buoyancy partially due to improved compliance and a broader spread of the tax base, he said. As a result there is no need for any new taxation this year.

Bauxite Levy Lowered

FL2304032288 Bridgetown CANA in English 2141 GMT 22 Apr 88

[Text] Kingston, Jamaica, April 22, CANA—Jamaica's Prime Minister Edward Seaga Thursday night confirmed a lowering of the island's bauxite production levy for bauxite/alumina companies here which operate at full capacity. The companies will also have to pay the island's 33 and1/3 per cent tax on profits from which they were previously exempt, the Jamaica leader also confirmed.

To create an incentive to operate at full capacity, a new bauxite levy regime is being offered, Seaga said in opening debate here on J8 billion dollar budget for the 1988/89 fiscal year (1 JCA dol; 18 cents U.S.). The new regime will reduce the amount of levy if production is at full capacity. Also the companies will pay income tax on profits which they now do not pay, he added.

The prime minister did not announce the level of reduction of the levy, but industry sources recently told CANA it would be 50 per cent.

The controversial levy, introduced in 1974 by the former Michael Manley administration, is indexed to the average price for primary aluminium ingot received by the American majors. The basic rate is 7.5 per cent of the cost of primary ingot, but could fall depending on production level and the amount of foreign exchange the companies brought into the country to meet expenses.

The new scheme comes into force in 1989 after the expiry of the current regime at year-end, Seaga said.

The new regime will initially apply to at least the 800,000-tonne alumina refinery in the South Central Jamaican parish of Clarendon which is now equally owned between the government and the Alumina Company of America (Alcoa).

The government recently acquired an additional 44 per cent share in the plant to give it 50-50 participation after Alcoa sought to take back full control of the refinery, which for two years was leased to a state company here. The government has insisted that the plant run at full capacity and also be expanded—undertakings Alcoa had refused to give without either a removal or drastic reduction of the levy.

Seaga said that negotiations were continuing with the Alumina Company of Canada (Alcan) to run its two plants here at full capacity. The plants have a combined capacity of 1.1 million tonnes, but have been operating at about 80 percent.

The 1.1 million tonne capacity Alumina Partners (Alpart) Refinery, closed since 1985, remains idle because of corporate uncertainty within its major owner, Kaiser.

Seaga said that negotiations were proceeding with the Soviet Union for a further bauxite supply contract to replace the one which expires in 1990. The current contract is for a supply of a million tonnes a year, and Kingston has been seeking a substantial increase on the figure.

Jamaica's bauxite production has declined sharply since 1980, moving from 112 million tonnes to the current level of just over seven-and-half million tonnes. The bauxite sector is not likely to regain the predominant position it once held before the structural adjustment of the economy, Seaga said. But there is still much room for increased performance, which if the present negotiations are successful, could restore production levels to 85 per cent of the 1980 level by 1989, he added.

The Jamaican leader also announced that his government was now in negotiations with the International Monetary Fund (IMF) for a new economic support agreement to replace the U.S.150 million dollar, 15-month standby facility that expires at the end of May. He did not say how much money Jamaica was seeking in the current negotiations, but was confident there would be no hitches.

This time there are no major points of dispute, as the performance of the economy last year and the year before have been strong and positive, indeed the best in the 15 years, he said.

Jamaica has been in and out of IMF agreements since 1977, and the current one—the fourth under Seaga—was agreed in January 1987 after 10 months of negotiations, following a breach of performance targets the previous March.

The Jamaican economy grew an estimated five per cent in 1987 and the government has projected similar growth this year.

The government has also been successful in tightening the public sector deficit, which at the end of the 1987/88 fiscal year was two per cent of gross domestic product (GDP) and projected at 2.4 per cent of GDP for 1988/89.

Seaga said that 21 major public sector companies showed a surplus of J640 million dollars for the ending of March, and projected at J631 million dollars for 1988/89. They were moving from a deficit of J37.7 million dollars in 1980, Seaga said.

Salinas Addresses PRI Leaders in Puebla

PA2404035088 Mexico City XHTV Television in Spanish 0200 GMT 23 Apr 88

[Report by Ana Cristina Pelaez; passages within quotation marks recorded]

[Excerpts] Today PRI presidential candidate Carlos Salinas de Gortari offered to make the necessary reforms and changes to have better democracy and to eliminate the obstacles that hinder participation, freedom, and Mexico's development. He will propose more congressional participation in the control of the foreign debt, the planning process, and the creation or dissolution of decentralized institutions. Speaking in Puebla, he said the changes made 50 years ago are being exhausted and he will respond without fear to the popular clamor for change in our times.

[Salinas] "We will change to become stronger and not weaker [applause] and to give full democratic life to our political system and not to destroy it."

Speaking to PRI leaders today, Salinas de Gortari said:

[Salinas] "I will implement the changes that are truly of interest to the people. I will not yield to short-term political pressures or make changes without adequate thought, preparations, foundation, or planning. The urgency of these changes is not determined by the opposition but by the Mexican people and my conviction of the need to hurry the pace to resolve the nation's problems." [passage omitted]

He recognized that more and better democracy does not automatically resolve the problems of development or guarantee a resolution of social problems. Salinas de Gortari proposed four large areas in which democracy must be intensified. The first is the institutional renewal of political life. This would include the strengthening of the legislative, judicial, and executive branches.

[Salinas] "I am convinced of the need for a democratically strong presidency, not authoritarian but firm and energetic, not harsh or oppressive but efficient and alert to respond to the people's demands."

He called for a more active Congress and a Chamber of Deputies with real powers to watch over and control the executive branch agencies. [passage omitted]

The presidential candidate also said the Senate should be more representative of the powers of the states and more active in foreign policy. He said the structure of the political parties will be strengthened, and he promised that PRI, as a promoter of change, will undergo self-criticism and undertake in-depth internal reform. Salinas de Gortari spoke about the need to more greatly redistribute the decisionmaking power of the states and municipalities.

The second area that requires change is the imparting of justice and greater security for citizens. The third aspect would be the opening of mechanisms of social participation and organization by using referenda and popular initiatives. The fourth area would be information and culture. In this regard, Salinas de Gortari said the communications media are also responsible for the proper development of the democratic process and are able to create consensus and guide the government's action.

[Salinas] "It is up to the communications media to make productive proposals."

He said one of his objectives is to have Mexico overcome the subculture of rumor, distrust, and lack of faith and belief. [passage omitted]

Cooperation Agreement Signed With Argentina

FL2304170588 Mexico City NOTIMEX in Spanish 0431 GMT 23 Apr 88

[Text] Mexico City, 22 April (NOTIMEX)—The Secretariat of Commerce and Industrial Development (Secofi) and its equivalent in Argentina have signed an agreement for technical cooperation in the supply and commercialization of basic foodstuffs. The document shows that the organizations signing this agreement are the National Company for Basic Commodities (Conasupo-Diconsa), for Mexico, and the Commerce Secretariat, for Argentina.

Financial resources will be obtained by the two sides from the corresponding national, regional, and international organizations. The current agreement will in effect for 3 years with the option of renewal for the same period of time.

El Salvador

Supreme Court Accepts ARENA's Elections Writ

PA2304220388 San Salvador Canal Doce Television in Spanish 0300 GMT 23 Apr 88

[Excerpt] The Supreme Court of Justice has ordered the suspension of the delivery of credentials to the second deputy assigned to the Christian Democratic Party [PDC] in La Union Department. The constitutional court decided this when it accepted the writ of amparo presented by ARENA [Nationalist Republican Alliance] against the Central Electoral Council [CCE].

Today the constitutional court of the Supreme Court of Justice accepted the suit filed by ARENA, which is claiming one deputy in La Union Department, alleging that the CCE has violated the Constitution. The court notified ARENA leaders of this decision in the presence of Freddy Cristiani, Dr Francisco Guerrero, and (Gloria Salguero Gros). They were also notified that the delivery of credentials to the PDC deputy-elect for La Union has been suspended. In other words, the court has ordered the CCE to suspend the swearing in of both the deputy and his alternate.

People familiar with the matter said that although this is an interim decision, the court has determined that there were constitutional violations. [passage omitted]

Honduras

Armed Forces Report EPS Incursion; 2 Killed

PA2404184588 Panama City ACAN in Spanish 1727 GMT 24 Apr 88

[Text] Tegucigalpa, 24 Apr (ACAN-EFE)—A Honduran soldier and a civilian were killed in an incursion by Sandinist People's Army troops in Honduran territory the morning of 13 April, it was reported here today.

The attack occurred between 0200 and 0300 in the border community of Suji, department of Gracias a Dios, on the eastern side near the Nicaraguan border, states a communique released by the Honduran Armed Forces in this capital.

The attack lasted 45 minutes and was repelled by a Honduran Army unit that went out to defend the people.

Samuel Toribio Miller, a soldier, and Euardo Martinez, a civilian, were killed in the clash. The civilian was captured and brutally tortured, according to the report by the Honduran Armed Forces.

Some 17 people, including civilians and military, were wounded.

The EPS, aside from destroying the community of Suji, looted the inhabitants' production cooperative and took 15,000 lempiras ($7,500) in food and cash.

After the incursion, local troops made a reconnaissance of the area and arrested a sizeable number of Nicaraguans "who had been loitering near the area in a suspicious attitude in the past few days," it was reported.

Suji is a township on the banks of the Coco or Segovia River, which is on the border between Honduras and Nicaragua.

The 5th Infantry Battalion Command based in Mocoron, 30 km from Suji, invited representatives of the office of the UN High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) to attest to the incidents of the morning of 13 April.

The military also asked UNHCR to instruct its suboffices in Mocoron to increase control of the refugee camps in that region of Honduras and to avoid meddling in "matters of exclusive concern of national security and the faithful fulfillment of the laws of the the Republic."

The EPS incursion shows once again the Nicaraguan Government's intention not to respect the spirit and letter of the peace agreements signed by the Central American presidents last January in Costa Rica, the military communique concluded.

On 15 March Honduras reported a Sandinist invasion of the sector of Bocay in the eastern department of Olancho. To dissuade the aggressors, it requested aid from the United States, which sent in 3,200 troops of the 7th Infantry Division and 82d Airborne Division.

Bomb Explosion Said To Target Nicaraguan Rebels

PA2404125388 Buenos Aires REUTER in Spanish 0607 GMT 24 Apr 88

[Excerpts] Tegucigalpa, 23 Apr (REUTER)—Tonight a high-powered bomb exploded at a residence on the northern outskirts of the capital, in an attack apparently directed against Nicaraguan Indians who are rebelling against the Managua Government.

The attack, which occurred at 2135, caused no casualties.

At the residence, where a family gathering was taking place, four vehicles were damaged and doors, windows,and fences were destroyed. [passage omitted]

Neighbors have said that the residence was formerly frequented by leaders of the Nicaraguan Indians who are fighting the Managua government from bases in Honduras.

A policeman told newsmen that the bomb may have been thrown from a moving vehicle. [passage omitted]

Nicaragua

Ortega on Aid to Contras, Talks, Embargo

PA2304005488 Managua Domestic Service in Spanish 1732 GMT 22 Apr 88

[News conference held by President Daniel Ortega with reporters at the Presidency in Managua—live; monitored in progress]

[Text] [Ortega] ...and that if Honduras authorizes AID to deliver the humanitarian aid to Bermudez' counterrevolutionary forces in its territory that would legitimize the mercenary forces' presence in Honduran territory. Also, if it does not rectify this decision, Honduras would in fact be supporting the hard-line faction, meaning Bermudez' Somozist faction that opposes the Sapoa agreements, and it would be affecting the contra Directorate and other forces that favor the Sapoa agreements.

I stated all this quite clearly to President Azcona, and I also told him that Nicaragua is analyzing the possibility of requesting a UN Security Council meeting to discuss this topic. We believe that this is a grave violation of international law, relations between states, and the Esquipulas agreements, which President Azcona himself signed. In fact, the communique issued by the Honduran Foreign Secretariat and signed by Foreign Secretary Carlos Lopez Contreras legitimizes, or accepts, the counterrevolution's presence in Honduran territory.

President Azcona said to me that he was told these people were starving to death and it was necessary to send them humanitarian aid, so he had approved it following a meeting with specialists. He had decided to authorize the shipment of food to the contras in several flights from Toncontin Airport. He added that Honduran church representatives would verify at the airport that only food was being shipped to the contras.

I explained to President Azcona that we had information that this situation was being used to send airplanes from Swan Island loaded with weapons for the contra camps in Honduran territory. Once rearmed, the counterrevolutionary forces would later enter Nicaraguan territory to continue the war. He answered that he only had information about the flights which he had authorized, meaning the ones taking off from Toncontin Airport. He also stated his concern about what should be done about the contra groups that are inside Honduran territory, that is, if they are really starving to death.

I told him that we could resolve that problem on a bilateral basis, between the Honduran and Nicaraguan Governments, by giving these people refugee status. They would be relocated and, therefore, disarmed. They would have to be disarmed and relocated on Honduran territory, so they could receive humanitarian aid from UNHCR or any other organizations that specialize in taking humanitarian aid to those who already have refugee status.

The other option these contras had was to establish themselves in the areas we plan to define during the forthcoming meetings in Managua, provided the Directorate manages to prevail over the Somozist group at the meetings. That group has already brought about a deep schism within the mercenary forces. There is a confrontation among the military chiefs of the contras: One group questions Bermudez and supports the Directorate, while the other group supports Bermudez. The actions to be taken by the counterrevolutionary groups within the next few days will be decisive to the success of the Sapoa peace plan.

After talking broadly with President Azcona on this subject, he told me he was going to analyze the situation and would contact me again today to make a decision. I then told him the most advisable, constructive, and positive thing for Honduras to do would be to tell AID that it should wait for the Directorate and the Nicaraguan Government to decide on the way the humanitarian aid would reach the contras. In addition, those contras who are determined to remain in Honduran territory will have to be given a choice: Either they accept going to the areas on Nicaraguan territory where they will receive humanitarian aid or they agree to become refugees and will have to be relocated on Honduran territory, toward the northern area, far from the Nicaraguan border where these mercenary forces have their main camps. These camps have already created great tensions, as they did earlier this year when the United States even used this situation to bring the 82d Airborne Division to Honduras and support these mercenary forces.

The Nicaraguan ambassador to the United States has the mission not only of presenting a formal protest to the United States over sabotaging the peace plan and endangering the Sapoa agreements, and over supporting Bermudez—that Somozist guard—while disregarding the Directorate. He also has the mission of communicating to the U.S. Government that the Nicaraguan Government took President Reagan at his word when he told the press last year that the moment the Nicaraguan Government sits down to talk with the contras, the U.S. Government would sit down to talk with the Nicaraguan Government.

Our ambassador will take an official proposal to President Reagan to begin these talks between the U.S. and Nicaraguan Governments on 15 May in Manzanillo, Mexico, or any other place the U.S. Government may propose. We are saying this based on what President Reagan said and based on the fact that the contras and the Nicaraguan Government signed an agreement on 23 March to the effect that there is an offensive cease-fire and this cease-fire is being 98-percent fulfilled. Therefore, the time has come for the U.S. Government to be true to its word and to what President Reagan said last year and begin bilateral talks with the Nicaraguan Government to discuss security issues. I repeat, we propose

that these meetings begin on 15 May in Manzanillo, Mexico, where we held previous meetings with U.S. Government representatives.

The meetings could also be held in another place proposed by the United States, which Nicaragua would be willing to accept. This is what we wanted to tell the Nicaraguan people, as well as the national and international press, and at the same time stress the gravity of the situation. We feel that the days ahead will be determining factors in relation to the meeting scheduled for 28, 29, and 30 April in Managua, in strengthening the positions of those who favor the Sapoa agreements and a negotiated solution, and in overcoming the resistance of those who do not accept the Sapoa agreements.

Otherwise, we would face a different picture, in which the Somozist Guard Bermudez would impose his will and the Sapoa agreements would be killed. We hope not to see that in the next few days.

Do you have any questions?

[Reporter] I am [name indistinct] from London's BBC. If I am not mistaken, in your speech last Monday you said that unless the United States lifts the economic embargo on Nicaragua no humanitarian aid for the mercenary forces or contra forces would be allowed to enter this country. Your government also made a cease-fire proposal to the contras in which, if I am not mistaken, the conditions for the delivery of nonmilitary aid are conditioned upon the signing of a permanent or definitive peace agreement, which the contras rejected [words indistinct]. So, if this [words indistinct] the United States now, the problem concerning the aid was created by the Nicaraguan Government, which has placed conditions on the delivery of aid to the contras when they are dying from hunger. Could you pleaase explain these contradictions?

[Ortega] In regards to your first question, at no time—and the recordings are there—have I said that if the embargo is resumed [as heard] the humanitarian aid for the contras would not be allowed to enter the country. That is not what I said. I clearly said then and I reiterate it today that we will not make exceptions in facing an embargo, if the embargo is resumed. Here, in implementing the embargo, the United States has left an escape clause to deliver funds and all kinds of aid to political groups, newspapers, business groups, etc., who maintain positions against the revolution. So, here the embargo applies to all or it is lifted if it benefits all Nicaraguans. That is our position.

Now, regarding the humanitarian aid, that is a specific matter included in the Sapoa agreements. It is the aid the U.S. Government has been sending to the contra forces. In this case, it is humanitarian aid that according to the congressional law is intended to facilitate a peaceful solution and to achieve definitive peace.

This is linked to your second question, because at the meeting in Managua following a 7-day meeting in Sapoa, where no agreement was reached regarding the modus operandi, two aspects came together. In the Sapoa agreements we had established 28 March as the date to agree on the zones and the modus operandi. We also agreed that on 6 April the Nicaraguan Government and the Directorate would hold a high-level meeting here to set the date for a definitive cease-fire.

As no agreement was reached in Sapoa after 7 days—and we all know about the behavior of the contra delegation, which was always late or did not did not arrive, etc.—the points that were left pending on the 28th got connected with points that were to be implemented on the 6th here in Managua. It was only logical for Nicaragua to propose at that meeting that we set a timetable including all points. By setting a timetable we meant determining the dates when the zones would become effective after defining them; the dates for implementing the modus operandi; the dates for the disarmament process during which the contras would deliver their weapons to an internatinal organization; at what time the contras who so desire can rejoin the country's life. In that manner, we would have a date to begin implementing the Sapoa agreements as well as a completion date for them. The objective of the Sapoa agreements is not a truce, but total and definitive peace. In due time, and logically there will be a time for each thing, with the approval of the proposed timetable establishing definite beginning and ending dates, starting with the [definition of] zones and the modus operandi and ending with definitive peace when these people should have rejoined the country's normal life with all their rights and guarantees, then we would proceed to implement that timetable.

However, a calendar that gives security to the two sides and no chances to play any kinds of tricks was already approved. Logically, each thing has its moment within a calendar. We need to discuss the timetable to implement that calendar with them: How long will contra forces be concentrated in the areas? How much time will be allotted for the implementation of the modus operandi? What will the deadline be for disarming the contras? How much time will be given to the integration of the contras into the country's civilian life? There is a moment when the contras will also be involved in the national dialogue through its Directorate representatives, and there is another moment when prisoners will be released; a certain number of contras will be released at one time, and Somozist guardsmen will be released at another time in keeping with the ruling handed down by the Inter-American Human Rights Commission. Therefore, our proposal is very clear and simple; it is not complex at all. It simply involves a calendar; it involves agreeing on a calendar in which we decide: We will start the peace process at this date and we will construct the peace process at that date. Between the starting and ending dates, we will implement the next steps, because it makes no sense to agree on parts of a whole; we must reach agreement on the whole picture and see how the parts are implemented as time goes by.

[Zelaya] Mario Zelaya of Voz de Nicaragua. [passage indistinct]

[Ortega] As for the claim that the contras are dying of hunger, what we know is that contra spokesman have denied this. Therefore, it is not true they are dying of hunger. This is a pretext to immediately introduce communications equipment and arms. This is a trick to introduce arms, because we know that flights bearing arms for contra camps are leaving Swan Island, taking advantage of the flow of humanitarian aid from the (?Sandino Airport). There are flights toward the camps. It is easy; since there are flights from Toncontin to the camps, it is easy to establish certain flights from Swan Island toward contra camps in Honduran territory.

[Reporter] Has Deputy Foreign Minister Tinoco, the government's chief negotiator, already contacted the counterrevolutionary hierarchy to convey this serious situation? If so, what was their reply? Another question: It is a matter of concern that the Honduran church is now interested in supervising humanitarian aid to the contras, while previously it failed to denounce the presence of counterrevolutionary bases in this territory. Do you plan to contact Cardinal Miguel Obando y Bravo to have him convey this serious situation to the Honduran church?

[Ortega] We have held informal contacts with the contra Directorate, and we are preparing formal official publications to put all this on record. Since this is a publication, I suppose that the OAS secretary general and Cardinal Obando y Bravo will receive a note. As for the participation of the Honduran church, I wish to make this clear: First, the Honduran church has denounced the contra presence in Honduran territory; it has assumed a very clear position in this regard. It has denounced the contra presence in Honduran territory on several occasions. The Honduran church has assumed a very courageous and firm position in this regard. I believe they have been surprised by this; they do not fully understand the Sapoa matters; they do not fully understand a U.S. congressional law. President Azcona must have summoned them and said that refugees are dying of hunger in camps, because that is what President Azcona was told. That is what he told me. He asked the church to verify this. I believe the Honduran church is verifying this with a lot of good will. We know they have been very critical of the presence of contras there. The church has condemned crimes; it has criticized violations of sovereignty in Honduras.

[Reporter] Mr President, first, I would like you to give us more details on flights from Swan Island to Toncontin. Do you have an estimate of the amount of weapons that have been transported and for how long? Second, included in the funds approved by the U.S. Congress to aid the contras is over $17 million to help Nicaraguan children who are victims of war. Will the government accept that money?

[Ortega] As for the Toncontin flights, it is known that the Honduran Government itself has acknowledged they are taking place. Therefore, at the same time these Toncontin flights were activated, flights from Swan Island were activated. It is clear this would take advantage of the fights flown from Toncontin to the camps to introduce arms for the contras. We have very firm reports that there are arms and ammunition at Swan Island and that they have been carried to the camps. Discussions in Congress and indecision regarding whether to channel aid to the contras forced a reduction in the frequency of flights from Toncontin; pardon, I mean from Swan Island.

However, they are now taking advantage of flights from Toncontin to the camps to renew and intensify flights carrying weapons from the Swan Islands to camps in Honduras; in areas that you already know were recently the focus of tension. They are about 10 or 12 miles inside Honduras in the San Jose de Bocay area and other places.

As for aid to the children, we have carefully read the law, and what it says is that half of the $17 million, that is $8.5 million, would be for Nicaraguan children and the rest would be for children throughout the world. It talks of $8.5 million for Nicaraguan children. That is how much would enter Nicaragua.

We acknowledge that the approval of these funds by the U.S. Congress is due not to the will of the U.S. Government and President Reagan but to the goodwill and the willingness of liberal Democratic congressmen who are aware and convinced of the harm that the war has caused to the Nicaraguan people and children. We recognize this and we consider it a positive gesture.

However, at the same time, we think the greatest harm to the Nicaraguan children and people comes from the U.S. Government's aggressive policy of war, blockade, and embargo. The most fitting thing at this time would be for the U.S. Congress to be concerned so that, in response to the peace efforts by the Central American presidents and in response to the peace efforts by the Nicaraguan Government and the contra Directorate that signed the 23 March agreement in Sapoa, on 1 May the U.S. Congress would lift the embargo, so President Reagan would lift the embargo because we know that this is a decision made by the executive and not by Congress, so it is up to the U.S. President to lift the embargo that he decreed against Nicaragua. Therefore, that is what we hope will take place, that the U.S. Government will lift the embargo. That would really bring a little security, tranquillity, and resources to Nicaraguan children.

[Reporter] President, regarding the embargo, I have two questions. What real possibilities exist that the embargo will be lifted? The other question is that yesterday, the U.S. House of Representatives approved in principle a new trade law; if the embargo were lifted, in what way could this trade law serve to somewhat continue the effects of the embargo or, in case the embargo continues, how could that law be complementary to the embargo?

[Ortega] Well, the trade law's effects on the embargo and whether or not the embargo is renewed on 1 May logically depend on the U.S. Congress. There are more than propitious and favorable conditions for the U.S. Government and President Reagan to act constructively and to say on 1 May: In a gesture to strengthen the peace effort in Nicaragua, we will lift the embargo. However, up to this time, from the information that I gave you at the beginning of this news conference, the truth is that the attitude of the U.S. Government and President Reagan continues to be negative in the face of the progress achieved in favor of peace in Central America and in Nicaragua specifically.

[Reporter] I have two questions. What can you specifically offer to the United States to renew the Manzanillo talks? How would they be held? Will you ask for mediation by Contadora? How would that meeting be held? There is a great contrast between the way that you support and talk about Esquipulas and the attitude of the other Central American presidents who have, frankly, dismantled Esquipulas. What is your opinion?

[Ortega] Regarding the bilateral dialogue with the United States, what we are offering is to discuss the security aspects that the United States is raising so often against Nicaragua. It points to Nicaragua as a threat to U.S. security. We are willing to discuss this. The United States should also hear Nicaragua's concerns because Nicaragua feels and has experienced aggression by the United States. This is something that did not begin after the revolutionary triumph but that is historic and goes back to the last century. That must be overcome once and for all. Regarding the participation of Latin American countries, the Contadora and Support Groups, I think this would be a point to be discussed directly with the United States to see whether or not they would accept this. We have logically always been in favor of Latin American participation in all of this but we are not going to set conditions because we think this should be an unconditional dialogue.

Regarding peace efforts in Central America, Nicaragua has unquestionably done everything possible to comply with the Esquipulas accords. We are not the ones to judge what El Salvador, Honduras, Guatemala, and Costa Rica are or ar not doing. A report was presented by the Verification Commission when it was comprised of the United Nations, the OAS, the eight Latin American foreign ministers of the Contadora and Support Groups, and the five Central American foreign ministers. It clearly pointed out Nicaragua's compliance and the noncompliance by other countries. We refer you to that document.

We also want to stress that even though in the Guatemalan foreign ministers' meeting—where it was decided to propose the formation of an international verification commission made up of Canada, Spain, and the FRG—when Nicaragua proposed that it was important that there be a basic Latin American presence and that a neutral European country, a Nordic country, be included, there was strong resistance from some foreign ministers present to the participation of a Latin American and a neutral country. We are going to insist on this point. We are going to insist on this at the highest level, because we believe it would be very harmful to Latin American interests if a Latin American country is not present in a verification mechanism when countries of other regions are present.

Moreover, we believe that it is also important to have a European country there that is not neutral. [sentence as heard] Therefore, we will insist that the international verification commission be expanded to five countries. Canada, France, and Spain have received approval to participate in this international verification commission... [corrects himself] excuse me, I mean Canada, the FRG and Spain. We will insist that one Latin American and one Nordic country be included in the commission. That is, the international verification commission should be composed of five countries.

[Salgarat] My name is Juan Carlos Salgarat from CAMBIO 16 in Madrid. Is your government studying the possibility of calling for a Security Council meeting? What would have to happen for Nicaragua to call for a Security Council meeting?

[Ortega] Well, right now I am waiting for President Azcona's reaction, because he told me that after he had heard my views he would analyze the situation. I explained to him that this [aid to the contras] was neither established in the spirit of the Sapoa agreements nor in the Esquipulas agreements. This is a violation of the Esquipulas agreements and the Sapoa agreements, as well as of U.S. congressional laws.

This also weakens the contra Directorate, which has been negotiating a cease-fire, which signed the Sapoa agreements, and which has been negotiating a lasting peace. This would give more strength to the Somozist guardsman Bermudez, who is entrenched in Honduras, and who has already had conflicts with some contra members who support the Sapoa agreements. I hope to talk today with President Azcona again, and, depending on his answer, we will decide whether or not we will convene the Security Council.

[Alvarez] Commander Ortega, my name is Oscar Alvarez from Radio Sandino. Since the violations of the Esquipulas agreements and the Sapoa agreements have been proven—first of all, the Esquipulas agreements were signed by the Central American presidents—has our government considered the possibility of calling a Central American presidents' meeting to report to them the risks and the harm this [aid to the contras] would cause to this Central American effort for peace in Central America?

[Ortega] Well, since the crisis occurred at the Honduran border, when U.S. troops entered Honduran territory to threaten Nicaragua with the 82d Airborne Division, from that moment we studied the possibility of calling for a meeting at the highest level, a meeting of Central American presidents, and we immediately proposed a foreign ministers' meeting. Thus, this is an option we always have available. We do not rule it out, but, meanwhile, we prefer to exhaust bilateral dialogue, in this case with Honduras, because if Honduras abides by the Esquipulas and the Sapoa agreements, this would logically strengthen the contra Directorate's negotiating position and would weaken the position of the Somozist guard who is against peace.

[Del Rio] I am Juan Fernando Del Rio from the daily YA in Madrid. Mr President, after the Sapoa talks and the talks at the Camino Real Hotel in Managua, will you agree to Archbishop Obando y Bravo's request and provide a list of political prisoners in Nicaragua?

[Ortega] Well, the Nicaraguan Government has not prepared that list; it has been provided by international humanitarian organizations who have had access to the prisons and who have thus been able to draw up the list, because a list drafted by the government can always be termed as biased. However, when humanitarian organizations are given the opportunity to visit prisons and draw up the list, I believe the list has more credibility and cannot be questioned. Therefore, that list already exists and is well known.

[Talavera] I am Marilin Talavera, from BARRICADA. Regarding contacts with U.S. Democratic and liberal congressmen, and with other Senate members: Has the Nicaraguan Government contacted any of them to explain this situation concerning the [delivery of] humanitarian assistance by AID?

[Ortega] We presented the appropriate protests to the U.S. Government, which are well known. We have recalled our ambassador, who is returning with updated information and with specific proposals to the U.S. Government. One of them is the immediate suspension of humanitarian aid through Honduras and to abide by the Sapoa agreement. Another proposal is the date for the meeting with the U.S. Government, which we propose should be held on 15 May.

[Reporter] Since the ambassador is here, I would like to take this opportunity to ask him what the U.S. Congress can do in view of this violation of U.S. congressional law with this direct U.S. aid in Honduran territory. Also, what are the possibilities of lifting the embargo on 1 May and of resuming direct talks with Nicargua? I would also like the ambassador to talk to us about the electoral process and what kind of changes can be expected from the results of the elections.

[Ortega] I would rather like to stay within the points we have been discussing. We could discuss the electoral problems on another occassion...

[Reporter, interrupting] Well, about the aforementioned aid in Honduras, which violates U.S. congressional laws.

[Ortega] This is why the ambassador at this moment has the duty of informing the U.S. State Department and the U.S. Government that it should abide by the Sapoa agreement. Obviously, we must stress this aspect, because the U.S. congressional law is very clear in regard to sending of aid, which should conform to the Sapoa agreement. The U.S. congressional law is very clear in this regard. Therefore, we are sending this protest to the U.S. Congress and demanding that they immediately cease sending the aforementioned aid through Honduran territory.

Furthermore, we are negotiating with Honduras, so it will change its stance and adopt a constructive attitude regarding the peace process. Well, it is late now.

RN's Cesar Complains of Lack of U.S. Support

PA2304164688 Managua Radio Corporacion in Spanish 0400 GMT 23 Apr 88

[Text] Washington—Today Nicaraguan Resistance [RN] leader Alfredo Cesar said the United States has left the RN practically on its own during one of the most critical periods in its struggle against the Managua authorities.

At a news conference Cesar said: We are practically on our own, because the U.S. State Deparment does not seem to show any interest now. We would like to see a more active U.S. participation in the process.

Cesar admitted that approximately 3,000 to 4,000 anti-Sandinist combatants have fled to the border with Honduras because of the lack of food. He added that the situation of some isolated groups is really desperate.

A contra source said that at present there is a power struggle within the rebel military elite. Top contra military leader Enrique Bermudez is involved in this struggle. The contra Directorate will try to resolve the problem at a special meeting in Miami this weekend.

Cesar also said that the last round of negotiations with the Sandinists in Managua last week was on the verge of disaster, and he asserted that the signing of a second agreement depends solely on the Nicaraguan Government's political will.

Cesar said: A second agreement on the enclaves, where our forces will be gathered, is practically ready; it could be signed at the upcoming 28-29-30 April meeting, when we will again meet with the Sandinists.

Alfredo Cesar added that the Sapoa process cannot go on forever, and if there are no specific advancements toward democracy in Nicaragua by June, we could again request military aid from the United States.

Cesar stated: Right now we are not interested in more military aid. We want to change perspectives and follow this negotiating process until the end. For that, we need everybody's support, including that from the United States, Central America, and the Western world.

Alfredo Cesar, one of the signers of the Sapoa agreements, said that interest in Nicaragua has decreased in the United States, but he added that it could be very useful if President Ronald Reagan were to dicuss this topic at his meeting with Soviet leader Mikhail Gorbachev in Moscow during the summit scheduled for the end of May.

The RN cannot discuss the Soviet presence in Nicaragua. That is a national security problem that must be discussed by the United States, Alfredo Cesar said. He added that the U.S. participation in the process must occur before 1 June.

According to the Sapoa agreements, by 1 June all rebels must be concentrated in seven large pockets in Nicaragua, the government must have released 50 percent of its political prisoners, and a second phase of negotiations to end the war and head toward the total democratization of the country must have started.

Cesar concluded: I am neither optimistic nor pessimistic about the future, I am simply realistic. We will exhaust all possibilities in this process and we hope we all win.

Panama

Cabinet Members Resigns, New Ministers Named

Santana Submits Resignation

PA2204165088 Panama City Domestic Service in Spanish 1616 GMT 22 Apr 88

[Report by Jairo Posada]

[Text] Labor Minister Candelario Santana has just confirmed to this reporter that he has submitted his resignation to President Manuel Solis Palma, as other ministers have probably done.

Other Ministers Resign

PA2204225188 Paris AFP in Spanish 2206 GMT 22 Apr 88

[Excerpts] Panama City, 22 Apr (AFP)—An official source has announced that Panamanian cabinet ministers have tendered their resignations so President Manuel Solis Palma can reorganize his cabinet in order for the government to confront the country's current economic and political crisis.

Today at noon, Romulo Escobar, president of the ruling Democratic Revolutionary Party, PRD, said Foreign Minister Jorge Abadia and Minister of the Presidency Nander Pitty were the first ministers to tender their resignations.

However, it is not known whether the Labor Party and Liberal Party ministers have done the same. [passage omitted]

According to Romulo Escobar, the purpose for the resignations is to allow the president to set up his own group to work with under his own terms.

The Council of Ministers has remained unchanged since the administration of ousted President Eric Arturo Delvalle. [passage omitted]

New Members Named

PA2504021588 Panama City Television Service in Spanish 0144 GMT 25 Apr 88

[Decree No 21 issued by Manuel Solis Palma, minister in charge of the Presidency, on 24 April]

[Text] The minister in charge of the Presidency, using his legal power, decrees:

Article No 1. To appoint the following people as state ministers:

Jorge Eduardo Ritter, foreign minister

Orville Goodin, finance and treasury minister

Rolando Murgas T., education minister

Cesar Martans, labor and social welfare minister

Darisnel Espino, agricultural development minister

Gustavo Gonzalez, planning and economic policy minister

Rene Bultron, public works minister

Article No. 2 This decree will be valid as of the date of its issuance.

Panama City, 24 April 1988

[Signed] Manuel Solis Palma, Minister in Charge of the Presidency

Full Cabinet Listed

PA2504141988 Panama City LA ESTRELLA DE PANAMA
in Spanish 25 Apr 88 pp A-1, A-2

[Text] Last night President Manuel Solis Palma announced the appointment of a new cabinet which he said is in accordance with the new social, economic, and political reality of the country. Seven of the 12 cabinet ministers are new. They are the ministers of finance and treasury, agricultural development, education, foreign relations, public works, planning and economic policy, and labor and social welfare.

The ministers of the Presidency, government and justice, commerce and industries, and housing remain in their posts.

The new ministers were sworn in last night before President Solis Palma, who immediately held a news conference with national and international newsmen.

The cabinet is as follows:

Dr Orville Goodin: finance and treasury minister

Julio Harris: deputy finance and treasury minister

Darisnel Espino: agricultural development minister

Luis Olmedo Castillo: deputy agricultural development minister

Dr Rolando Murgas T.: education minister

Juan Bosco Bernal: deputy education minister

Jorge Eduardo Ritter: foreign relations minister

Rene Bultron: public works minister

Gustavo Gonzalez: planning and economic policy minister

Cesar Martans: labor and social welfare minister

The following ministers remain in their posts:

Nander Pitty Velasquez: presidency minister

Augusto Valderrama B.: deputy presidency minister

Rodolfo Chiari De Leon: government and justice minister

Targidio Bernal: deputy government and justice minister

Dr Francisco Sanchez C.: health minister

Dr Eduardo Reyes: deputy health minister

Mario Rognoni: commerce and industries minister

Rolando Fung: deputy commerce and industries minister

Ricardo Bermudez: housing minister

Adsinar Cajar: deputy housing minister

Solis, Ministers Comment

PA2504040188 Panama City Domestic Service
in Spanish 0207 GMT 25 Apr 88

[News conference held by Manuel Solis Palma, minister in charge of the Presidency, new cabinet members, and moderator Jose Hernandez with national and international journalists at the Peace Room of the Presidency in Panama City—live; broadcast in progress]

[Text] [Solis] ...cooperation during these 60 difficult days that we have faced; and that the Panamanians have managed to withstand the situation given their level of stoicism, patriotism, understanding, and unwavering desire to be always a nation and never a colony.

Gentlemen, I am ready for your questions; the government team is also prepared to answer your questions.

[Hernandez] By tradition, the first question is asked by the president of the Foreign Correspondents' Association accredited to the Panamanian Goverment, Mr Tomas Alberto Cupas.

[Cupas] Tomas Cupas of UPI. Mr President, some organizations have been participating in a dialogue at Atlapa for several days. They requested a war cabinet. Is this the war cabinet? What will the new government team's guidelines be?

[Solis] We have chosen to interpret that phrase as a cabinet that responds to the needs of our current situation, meaning a dynamic cabinet that works as a team, a cabinet that constantly works without evading its full responsibility at any given moment. We believe that a war cabinet is a phrase; it is not a matter of appointing a war cabinet to declare war on the United States. No, this is a cabinet that will simply counter an aggression with the resources available to the Panamanian people. Our main resource is the Panamanian people's patriotism and interest in being, as I said before, an independent nation or state. That is the current cabinet's views, and I do not want to imply that the others did not share these views. It is simple: Each situation has its own characteristics and responsibility, and it is necessary to seek the most appropriate people for each situation.

[Hernandez] Telemetro Television of Panama City.

[Reporter] First, do these changes in your cabinet really represent a solution to the crisis at a time when the opposition, meaning the Civic Crusade, and even the

Catholic Church agree that General Noriega's departure is the only solution? Second, why is the high-ranking military officer's departure being delayed so long at a time when the country is drifting toward a crisis? Last, the people are worried because the disaster looming over the country could lay the groundwork for communism in Panama.

[Solis] First, we have created a cabinet composed of the people who have always been prepared to work for the country's benefit. We have not composed or discussed a cabinet of national unity because we have simply not reached an agreement on this topic. We have to work with the people who have permanently worked and struggled to resolve our daily problems. What was the other question you asked?

[Reporter] Why is the high-ranking military officer's departure taking so long when the country is drifting toward a crisis?

[Solis] When Gen Noriega put his job at my disposal, something which he later reasserted many times, I said I would accept his departure provided a national agreement was reached by all the forces comprising Panama's political sector. Since the dialogue has not taken place, we believe that the conditions are not right for the departure of that high-ranking military officer, meaning the Panama Defense Forces' commander.

Why did we say the national dialogue was a condition for his departure, or the agreement that must be reached about him? Because we believed, and we believe, that the Panamanian crisis is not the result of a problem about one man. The Panamanian crisis has much deeper roots. If we are going to talk about the country's situation, about overcoming the country's current stalemate, and about resolving the deep crisis we currently are withstanding, we must include all the reasons for this crisis—not only a problem about one man. Otherwise, we would be resolving personal problems or fulfilling certain people's or groups' psychological demands instead of seeking the source of our current crisis, which is really what all Panamanians should struggle for at all times and every minute. That is the main issue.

If the problem had to do with one man only, the Panamanian crisis could be resolved very easily. But this is not true. Is Noriega to be blamed for unemployment in Panama? Unemployment existed in Panama long before Noriega became commander. The economic crisis we have been suffering has more to do with the framework of a world crisis and very special and particular factors in Panama than with a single man. There are many situations that are not new. I can tell you that practically every situation we have is rooted in the country's past. No country enters a time of crisis just because a single man is designated at a particular moment. If it were so, we would negate the fundamental structures of the nation, the factors that form this national reality. To attribute the crisis to a man is a simplistic approach that makes no sense.

But let us discuss it. Let us sit down at a table to debate it. Let us discuss all the problems of the country. Let the possible solutions for the national crisis emerge from such a discussion. We would thus be willing to discuss, not only the commander's name, but also aspects of the government itself. We are not afraid to discuss this; quite the opposite is true. Let them come and sit down with us and present their views. They should not demand that we surrender prior to the start of the battle. This is what has been happening, and I hope you can understand it well.

[Hernandez] We ask local and international reporters to identify both themselves and the news media they represent at the time they ask their questions.

[Sizesloff] Good evening. John Sizesloff of NBC. In an interview with PRENSA LATINA, Gen Noriega admitted that he negotiated with a top U.S. Government official. Can you tell us if you were involved in those negotiations? Can you describe the position both of Panama and the U.S. Government officials? My second question is: Can you estimate, within the negotiating process with the United States and according to the national dialogue, the month in which we can anticipate a solution?

[Solis] First, I want to tell you I am informed of those talks. I would not call them negotiations. You will understand I do not have to disclose the nature of those talks. It is up to those who talked to reveal their nature; it is not up to me, although I have been constantly informed in detail of the progress of such talks.

As for your other question, I cannot tell you when the national dialogue will conclude. Many aspects have to be considered. There is the dialogue between the Panama people's forces and some political groups. Some of those groups are from the government and others are not. The latter do not yet include the opposition or so-called opposition in Panama.

This dialogue has been probing deep into the causes of and the solutions to the national crisis, as they see them. Of course, I could not determine how long this dialogue will take, because it has been organized and is being held by groups that do not depend on the national government; they are fully independent groups. In this dialogue, we are just another participant. Other talks have been tried and have not been initiated, not because of the government or those of us who are responsible for presently leading the country, but because the opposition has insisted on a dialogue with preliminary commitments, with the yielding of some points prior to the dialogue. I repeat, this is a surrender and not a dialogue. Saying: We will talk when you have done this and that,

when Gen Noriega has left, when the government has withdrawn, when people we can fully trust are appointed—is simply setting conditions for the dialogue. We think this would not be a dialogue but a surrender, and we have not surrendered.

[Reporter] Mr President, what plans does your government have for the school year and the rest of the economic crisis?

[Solis] The school year and...?

[Reporter, interrupting] And the economic crisis. What measures will you take regarding this crisis that is increasingly aggravating?

[Solis] I would like the new education minister [Rolando Murgas], who has just started to, I mean, who has just been informed of his designation, to answer this question. I think he can.

[Murgas] Following instructions from the president of the Republic, the first task I shall undertake as soon as I assume office as minister of education is to determine, as soon as practicable, the date for the beginning of the school year in our country. This is a concern of the national government and at the same time is a task that the Education Ministry has been working on very seriously and in an orderly fashion. We believe that next week we can offer the country a tentative, precise date for the start of the school year. In this respect, we will have to hold a series of talks and make commitments to guarantee the continuity of the school year.

The idea is—and the whole nation must be clear on this—that the school year be made without any cuts [mutilacion], that it be made [words indistinct], and that is be what you expect, which is that our youths go to school and comply with the duty to educate themselves. This can be a reality in our country and thus demonstrate to itself that this country, which has been unhealthily attacked, has the strength and capacity to educate its youth. One way to make ourselves free is by educating ourselves.

[Solis] Regarding the next question on education [as heard], and so everyone knows the manner of work that is going to be a permanent modality of our government, which is a work team, Finance Minister and acting Planning Minister Goodin is going to answer this.

[Goodin] Good evening. First, we have to analyze (?the causes) of the economic crisis in order to resolve them. Here we can clearly see that the U.S. economic aggression has created a crisis in the country. What has been the target of the attack? The banking system. Why? Because in normal times the banking system contributes 90 percent of the economic activity in the country. How did the crisis evolve? By blocking the banking system through the incapacity of the National Bank to carry out operations abroad through the economic war policy declared by President Reagan.

This has only been done to two countries in history, Iran and Libya—never to a country that is supposedly a friend of the United States. The United States has not been a country that threatens their security. This new instrument of blocking the banking system has caused a recession in the economy.

Therefore, the first thing we must do is resolve this problem, to normalize banking activities. We are working on this with the support of Latin America to find a solution. We expect to have a solution during this week, and the banking system will begin to function—with restrictions, but functioning—to stabilize the economy.

[Reporter] [Name indistinct]. It was said at the beginning when the Legislative Assembly appointed you minister in charge of the Presidency that you should also be in charge of a cabinet post. You have just named Rolando Murgas as education minister. I would like to know what the legal basis is for this, since you will no longer be education minister.

[Solis] I am not a lawyer, but I am going to answer you because it concerns me directly. The Constitution provides for the post of minister in charge of the Presidency, as head of the executive branch. It is a post created by the Constitution. When one cabinet minister is selected by the majority of the cabinet members to assume this post, he no longer performs the position he had. He cannot be education minister and minister in charge of the executive branch at the same time.

Just so you can see the reality of this, the operational fact of what I am saying, you would present to me the case, and we would have had it today, if we had not interpreted, as outstanding lawyers have done, the constitutional provision. [sentence as heard]

If the deputy education minister—who, by the way, was separated from his post because he is going to work for an international organization here in Panama—had still been in his post, and if we needed to appoint a new deputy education minister, we would have been unable to do it, because according to the law and the Constitution appointments of deputy ministers are decided by the president and the corresponding minister. If the deputy education minister were in charge of the ministry at the time, he would have continued being the deputy education minister. We would, therefore, have a deputy minister appointing someone to replace him while he was still the deputy education minister.

If that were the interpretation, there are a number of incongruities. The Constitution foresees the possibility of occupying a new post. I was appointed to a new post, and I cannot continue in the previous post I was appointed to.

[Hernandez] Following is reporter Nelson Notario.

[Notario] Nelson Notario Castro of the news service of the Cuban television service. A few days ago, during the inauguration of a work office in San Miguelito, Panama City, you cited a statement by a famous Venezuelan leader. You spoke [words indistinct]. You said this cabinet was appointed to fit in with the current situation. If you think it suitable, I would like you to give more information about the reason you have adapted this new cabinet to the current situation.

[Solis] Gladly. Distinguished reporter, we carefully analyzed the formation of this cabinet, and we chose these people, not on the basis of whether they are more or less competent than the previous ministers, but on the basis of our plans to face the crisis and to take the government forward. This cabinet was chosen to unify our plans.

We were previously facing a specific economic policy known as [words indistinct] or structural changes. That policy must change, basically because there have been essential changes—forgive the repetition—in our economic reality. In view of that situation, we must seek a team that fits better in this situation. We are also making changes in other institutions. I therefore reiterate that I am not saying this is a more or less efficient team than the previous one, but one that is more suitable to the current reality.

The phrase you are referring to is a statement made by Romulo Betancourt, who said at a time of party crisis that [words indistinct] were becoming troublesome, because if he placed them in forward positions, they blocked the way, and if he placed them in the rear, they lagged behind. I believe this cabinet will respond to Romulo's statement. It will neither be in the way nor lag behind. It is not a war cabinet, but a cabinet of struggle and permanent national effort. I will use your question to ask the cabinet to work constantly and permanently. Their work will take many hours. They will work on Saturdays and Sundays. Weekends [preceding word in English] and parties are over. We must work for Panama.

[Hernandez] Here is a reporter from ABC.

[Reporter] What is your reaction to the Mexican aid? What does this aid mean for Panama politically and economically?

[Solis] The Mexican Government is the first government to give specific aid within the content and spirit of the SELA resolution signed in Venezuela. That resolution represents cooperation with Panama. This cooperation depends on the most urgent needs that Panama presents to the brother Latin American governments and on what each of them can give us.

The Mexican Government has given us facilities to obtain oil, and it is also studying the possibilities of giving facilities to obtain certain raw materials, food, and perhaps medicine. They are also studying the possibility of helping us mint coins—not issue paper currency, but to mint coins. The Mexican Government has given specific aid to Panama. Other Latin American countries are studying the possibility. They have been analyzing and discussing our requests with us. Several SELA executive committee members came to Panama to study the possibilities of giving specific aid to Panama. By doing this, they will be going beyond the resolution of support to actually giving specific and necessary aid to help Panama face the economic aggression it is being subjected to.

[Hernandez] We again ask our colleagues to please identify yourselves and the media you represent whenever you ask a question. The AFP correspondent follows.

[Rodriguez] Roberto Rodriguez of AFP. Today the Catholic Church in Panama said that the economic measures implemented by the United States against Panama are unjust. How does your government evaluate the Catholic Church's new position?

[Solis] I believe the Catholic Church's position truly deserves our recognition. I sent a letter to the nuncio in Panama, Msgr Sebastian Laboa, over a month ago. I requested from him that the church issue a statement on the topic. The topic had been briefly mentioned in a communique that was issued prior to the letter I have mentioned. On this occasion, the measures—naturally, using expressions that characterize the church—are termed as inconvenient, etc. We use a different and more precise language. We describe them as criminal measures. However, we must respect the church, respect its language, and the position it has adopted concerning the aggression. The church's position is being supported by almost all the sectors in Panama. The people have set aside their differences with the government and assumed a responsible attitude, as it should be.

[Hernandez] Next journalist, please.

[Navarro] Ruth Navarro, ASSOCIATED PRESS. Mr President, I have two questions: First, you say that the cabinet has been appointed to counter the U.S. plans for an aggression and that the government will prepare plans to counter that aggression. What are the government's plans? Second, a lot has been said about a dialogue, but certain sectors say a dialogue is impossible if the news media are closed. Is the executive branch willing to reopen the closed news media?

[Solis] Thank you. First, the government does have a plan. Finance Minister Orville Goodin, who is charge of the plans, stated that one of our main problems right now is the banks' closure. We are working on this, and we have plans for a prompt reopening—although there will be some restrictions—of the news media. We have plans... [changes thought] I must add here that the banking system has begun to operate by accepting deposits. This week we will evaluate the flow of deposits and

the results attained; then we will discuss the compensation of other banks' assets. We will later discuss the news media's reopening with certain restrictions.

All this is being carried out according to a plan. It is a slow process, and we must be careful to avoid hasty actions that would cause chaos in the banking system and affect the accounts holders' money. We also have other plans. We have prepared plans to reactivate our agrarian sector and prevent a lack of supplies in August and September 1988. The minister of agricultural development [Darisnel Espino] can give us further details about the topic.

[Espino] Following the president's instructions, the agrarian development sector has evaluated our current situation. First, we have ascertained that the consumption of several national products has increased given the change in our people's diet. This has motivated Panamanian producers to activate their production plans concerning sowing, which begins now and ends 30 June. The preparation of land and sowing of products began last Friday in Veraguas Province. On Tuesday we will approve credits and stimulate the production activities in Chiriqui Province. Thus, we will begin a large-scale effort to increase our national production. We will be supported by the Panamanian producers, who are fully aware of their historic responsibility and motivation. We also have the support of Panamanian enterprises, which are fully aware that we must help and cooperate with the producers so all Panamanians may have enough food.

[Solis] Referring to the commerce and industries sector, the minister of commerce and industries [Mario Rognoni] can give us an idea of the work being carried out to attain an economic reactivation and improve the people's living conditions, particularly those of the most needy sectors in our country.

[Rognoni] In the field of commerce and industries, we are seeking to keep the largest number of enterprises operating by guaranteeing jobs for all workers. We are working both to acquire letters of credit and purchase basic and raw materials for the industries and replenish commerce inventories. Direct negotiations have been made with specific sectors, such as the financing agencies, presently hit very hard. Other sectors include tourism, also hit hard, where meetings have been held with hotel owners. In addition, an effort is being made in the sector of small enterprises and national handicrafts to protect them and ensure their survival.

A similar action is being taken regarding marine resources in the fishing area, which—we can say this with satisfaction—has not been affected. Actually, industrial fishing, such as shrimp fishing, has increased. There presently are more shrimp-fishing vessels than usual. Personal fishing in small boats is also being strengthened, because many Panamanians are engaged in this activity as a means of subsistence. We are in the process of fully assessing and taking an inventory in the mineral resources area to reactivate its labor force. We recall that Panama was a very successful mining country in the 19th century.

[Solis] We are also sizing up the unemployment situation. Plans have been made to cope with the problem of layoffs. Certain private enterprises have laid off workers without discussing it with the Labor Ministry. That ministry is always willing to assess the situation of each enterprise, both to protect the employees from abuses and recognizing the need to keep enterprises operational in the country under the current circumstances. We take this opportunity to suggest that employers not try to reach agreements with their workers in private. Even if they are authorized to lay off some employees or workers, there is a principle at work. We have two experts here. No worker can relinquish his rights. Should he do so, that action is null and void.

[Reporter] Mr President, [words indistinct] the National Information System. Can you expand on this, because [words indistinct]?

[Solis] Yes. I will begin with the last portion so the government minister [Rodolfo Chiari] can answer the specific question about the news media in general. The National Information System cannot at all be regarded as an attempt to nationalize the communications media. You and we are aware that the government has suffered from a very ineffective information service. You also know that foreign newspapers generally have not received the required information or attention from the government up until now. This service meets this need and does not, and certainly should not, attempt to interfere—should it do so, it would be violating its limits—with the activity of each institution's public relations service or whatever the name is used. It especially does not and should not interfere with the state communications media, such as Radio Nacional. It does not and should not take part in the direction and orientation of private communications media.

One thing is sure, however. Because of the level of disinformation we are being subjected to, the news media must be held accountable [contestatario] for the disinformation, because it is obligated to inform adequately.

The level of disinformation is such that I will recommend to the new education minister and authorities to begin by teaching our country to understand truth, to distinguish truth from lies. As part of our education, we should not let ourselves be deceived. This National Rumors Commission, CONABO, must not become such an efficient instrument. Our people apparently have not been properly taught to discern truth from lies. The Education Ministry will have a tremendous responsibility to teach our students to be analytical, so once they graduate from school they can identify the gross lies so

often voiced. These lies are so illogical and contradictory, and are nevertheless believed. This is the very simple, very dynamic, yet very respectful work of the communications media. There will be no intervention in private enterprise. The country will not be declared a socialist state, because we are a capitalist group that has been attacked by another capitalist country.

[Chiari] As for the news media that are presently being investigated, I would like to add the following: We are true believers in freedom of expression, but in a freedom with respect and order without libertinism. I do not believe in a freedom such as when they call for disorder or nonpayment of taxes. In fact, here are some reporters; you can see for yourselves that there is freedom of expression in this country. The reporters interview another person who claims to be president of the Republic. However, you are facing the president of the Republic. You can attest that we have not adopted any measures of any sort against you. Here is Mr Tomas Cupas, secretary or president of permanent foreign correspondents in Panama. He can attest to that. We are conducting an investigation based on the reasons I mentioned to you before, through the attorney general. As soon as that investigation is clarified, you can be completely sure that the opening of the media that are now closed will be allowed.

[Reporter] I would like to ask a question regarding future relations between Panama and the United States, within the framework of a future national solution. In the past, Panama has always been a strong and key ally of the United States in Latin America. I would like to ask you if because of the past months' developments, will relations between Panama and the United States have to change within the framework of a national solution? Will the United States be considered, say, an aggressor nation?

[Solis] You have seen the actions of the Panamanian people. This is a generous, broad-minded, and magnanimous people. Their government cannot but be a reflection of the goodness of this people. We have been attacked. However, if the United States stops attacking us and wants to maintain a relationship of friendship—until they attack us again—we will do so, because we are ready to coexist with other countries in absolute harmony and peace. We are permanent lovers of peace. This will chiefly depend on the United States. However, you cannot ask Panamanians who have experienced hunger not to remember with a bad taste this moment in which a democratic—quote, unquote—country mercilessly attacks, taking advantage of its power.

[Gonzalez] Justino Gonzalez of Onda Popular radio station. Mr President, in political circles and in some international news media, it was reported that the Panamanian Government had the intention or that it offered ministerial posts to the opposition sector in the country. This specifically means the Authentic Panamenist Party. My specific question is: Did that intention really exist within your government. If it did, what prompted that measure?

[Solis] Our government has always had a predisposition to a dialogue or a national pact or agreement. If as part of that agreement, in order to move the country ahead or to take it out of the situation in which it or we have been placed we must form a government of national unity with the participation of diverse sectors, we are ready to accept that agreement or understanding. So far, nothing has been offered. Instead, there is a permanent inclination to attack us or make us surrender. There has been an inclination to ignore the very foundations of the government or the Panamanian state, represented by the judicial, legislative, and executive branches. They insist on ignoring a government that the legislative branch determines. The judicial branch confirms it. When one adopts that position, it is impossible to be asking to join a government at the same time. They are refusing to be part of that government. However, if we sit down to seek the solutions to the country with our eyes set more on our fatherland than on our national interest [as heard], we have no problem in creating a government of national unity with all the forces that may so wish to—not to distribute power but with the responsibility of serving the country.

[Hernandez] This is the last question. This is a U.S. press correspondent.

[Reporter] [Words indistinct] of disinformation. I would like to have a clarification on disinformation. What exactly is disinformation and what is more dangerous for this country: disinformation or radio bemba [radio rumors]?

[Solis] We have both things here. Radio bemba nourishes those who are disinformed and sends them abroad to form a certain image of Panama. Panamanian bembas do not reach as far [laughter]; they stay in Panama. Foreign bembas, however, reach very far. [laughter]

Noriega Says Retirement Timetable 'Open'

PA2304214888 Panama City LA ESTRELLA DE PANAMA in Spanish 23 Apr 88 pp A-1, A-2

[Report by staff writer James Aparicio]

Yesterday the commander in chief of the Panama Defense Forces [FDP], General Manuel Antonio Noriega, told LA ESTRELLA DE PANAMA that the timetable for his reitrement as military chief "is open and filled with dates."

In an interview granted yesterday to LA ESTRELLA DE PANAMA, Noriega said, "Gen Noriega can leave any time: Tomorrow, 12 August, 3 November, 16 December, 1 January 1989; the timetable is open and filled with dates."

Noriega pointed out that the U.S. pressures against him and the Panamanian Defense Forces are because he refused "[to participate in] aggression against other peoples," and he pointed out that the pressures "will increase until the year 2000."

Noriega asked why these pressures are being exerted now, and answered that it is "because we are 1 year from a new government."

Referring to the United States, the military officer said "the empire needs a docile government that will sign international military agreements and serve the United States' political and economic interests in order to maintain its hegemony."

Noriega criticized local politicians whom he described as "domestics," because "they want power delivered to them on a silver platter," but they do not want to go to the interior or meet with their followers.

"They meet on Panama City streets so the foreign television cameras will report on them and show them, as they try to justify their role-playing, serving as vehicles for the empire's plans."

When asked about the alleged secret meetings between the opposition leaders and the church to "negotiate his retirement," Noriega answered that "the trouble is they do not speak with Gen Noriega; if they spoke with Gen Noriega they would be able to get to know him."

Noriega insisted that "there are leaders who want to use the situation in Panama as a rallying point for themselves in order to join the bandwagon and gain prestige."

The FDP chief said: "They all want to be like Msgr Obando y Bravo, Oscar Arias, Vinicio Cerezo, or the OAS secretary general."

Noriega pointed out that "everyone wants to be a negotiator in order to be on the hit parade [preceding two words in English] of fame and in the newspapers. That is the demagoguery of the talks, " he stated.

The military chief warned that the United States "has already experimented" with Panama, and he affirmed that if the country succumbs to those pressures, "this would mean that the fate of other Latin American countries would be ensured: as dominoes."

Noriega disclosed: "Here we are waging the last battle against imperialist plans," adding that "when people are not docile to an empire, they and their leaders become the target of that empire."

Concerning the alleged intruders that have tried to enter U.S. military bases here, Noriega denied that there was any evidence that Panamanians are involved in the incidents that took place during the last 2 weeks.

"We have given precise orders to our men to prevent a provocation. We have even recommended that the population be prudent," the military officer added.

Noriega charged that from now to the year 2000 "there will be various plans to penetrate the Defense Forces," and he charged that, just like in 1969 when they tried to stage a coup against General Omar Torrijios Herrera, "the gringos are [involved] up to their gills."

Noriega pointed out "in 1969, when there was a coup against Torrijos, the gringos were involved up to their gills," stating that the U.S. intelligence services "continue to be involved."

To conclude, Noriega added "as the undeniable leader of the Panamanian masses, Arnulfo Arias, says, history repeats itself," and he closed with a warm smile.

On U.S. Actions

FL2304192588 Havana Tele-Rebelde Network in Spanish 1700 GMT 23 Apr 88

[Text] General Manuel Antonio Noriega, chief of the Panama Defense Forces, has held a news conference with special Cuban correspondents Nelson Notario Castro and Emilio Regalado. Also present at the conference were journalists Luis Baez from PRENSA LATINA and Santiago Alvarez from the Cuban Cinematographic Art and Industry Institute.

The meeting between the Cuban journalists and Gen Noriega took place after the inauguration of another stretch of a road that was built in the mountains in the western part of the country by an FDP military engineering battalion.

After travelling by helicopter to a place approximately 300 km from the capital, Gen Noriega, those accompanying, and the Cuban journalists were able to see the joy of the residents of the area, some 12,000 people.

Speaking with the Cuban correspondents, the Panamanian military chief referred to several subjects, the national dialogue being held in the country promoted by the Unitary People's Front, among other topics.

[Beging recording] [Speaker] The soldiers that you command, my general, are not soldiers to be killed. [applause]

[Noriega] We place the ideas of dialogue and negotiation strictly in the political field since Panama's crisis has been created, strengthened, encouraged, and developed by the United States. Therefore, the... [changes thought] based on what? Based on a political issue. It is based

strictly in the search for power by those who were removed in 1968. It is the search for power by those who already have economic power and now want political power. That is the situation.

[Reporter] General, every day there are more U.S. military personnel in the Yankee bases in the Canal Zone. However, you can take the time to participate in the inauguration of a road out here, in the mountains. Do you feel at ease? You seem to be at ease and happy.

[Noriega] Yes, I feel at ease because we have located the malignant tumor. We have located the specific causes of the problem. Faced with the confusion, or the psychological war of the negative news cables, of the distorted news reports taken to the world, of the ill-fated images published about Panama, we can say that the source of that problem is on one street. It is among a group of people. Panama as a whole is not that specific street where the problems come from. Panama is not those men where the problems are right now. The Panamanian universe is this you have just seen. It is the countryside, the construction of a road, the search to find the solution to their problems.

[Reporter] Gen Noriega, creole Latin America, rebellious Latin America is with Panama. Do you have a message for Latin America, which is in solidarity with Panama?

[Noriega] It is precisely that Latin America that is with Panama must know that here in Panama is where we have the last trench of Latin American liberation. Here in Panama we are fighting the last battle against colonialism and neo-colonialism, as well as against the dependency, submission of the weak people, submitted to a scandalous foreign debt, to threats of force and coercion.

All of Latin America must know that an experimental plan is being carried out here to see how the driving and economic nerves of Latin America are strangled. The experimental soup is being cooked here as if it was a Vietnam to give it tomorrow to Argentina, the day after tomorrow to Uruguay, and then to Brazil, or to any other country. According to the way the doctrine of strangulation turns out for them, that is how the other countries of Latin America will be submitted. That is the message I want to give, without being a visionary but merely an analyst of history. I am merely a man who is telling Latin America today that here we have the essential elements of the U.S. instruments to give the Latin American leaders tomorrow, to submit to the Latin American people and governments so that they are not docile with the United States. [end recording]

On Dignity Battalions, Coup

PA2404013588 Havana Cubavision Television in Spanish 0000 GMT 24 Apr 88

[Excerpt] General Manuel Antonio Noriega, chief of the Panama Defense Forces, has granted an interview to special Tele-Rebelde reporters and other Cuban journalists.

The meeting was held after the inauguration of another stretch of a road that was built in the mountains in the western part of the country by an FDP military engineering battalion.

Speaking with the Cuban journalists, Gen Noriega referred to the dignity battalions formed by the people in view of possible U.S. aggression.

[Begin recording] [Noriega] The dignity battalions are made up of civilians, regardless of sex or age. However, their militancy is taken into consideration. All levels of Panamanian society are represented in these battalions, who are in the garrisons digging a trench at a time when the fatherland needs them. This is why we have these dignity battalions. [Words indistinct] recruitment has not been announced. However, the Panamanian people are already recruited. They are recruited under their flag, dignity, and desire to fight so this territory will not be yielded to any foreign power.

[Reporter] Will these battalions continue to exist after this crisis?

[Noriega] They have been a great experiment which has given us a broader idea of what an organized, trained, and militant people can do.

[Reporter] Today's media reports talked about a coup d'etat to be staged on Monday, 25 April. The media even said the U.S. Embassy was distributing money to achieve this. What can you add to this?

[Noriega] I have learned through the press and other information that Ambassador Arthur Davis—who was expelled from Paraguay for meddling in matters that were not his concern and who is a very insolent person, a man who is persona non grata in Panama—has opposition groups to do this. This is proof of the (?influence) the United States has on these groups. Therefore, these opposition groups, which should be seeking a political solution within the framework of the Republic, are not doing so because they are being promoted and encouraged by the United States. Every time negotiations arise, reports such as this one arise.

[Reporter] Do you think that this plan (?reported in the newspaper) is another pro-imperialist plan that Panama's counterintelligence foiled?

[Noriega] The information we have is first-hand information.

[Reporter] This means that the plan was foiled?

[Noriega] That is correct. [passage omitted] [end recording]

Church Requests Lifting of U.S. Sanctions

PA2404141388 Panama City Radio Alegre in Spanish 1325 GMT 24 Apr 88

[Text] The Panamanian Episcopal Conference believes that the most grave aspect of the country's political crisis is the military predominance in virtually all walks of national life, which shows the de facto dictatorship existing in Panama. The Episcopal Conference issued a lengthy report stating that the Panama Defense Forces [FDP] refuse to be subordinate to civilian authority. It expressed the necessity for a true national dialogue to overcome the crisis. The church requested the immediate suspension of the U.S. economic sanctions imposed against Panama, which it says violate national sovereignty, exceed any political pressure strategy, and constitute, per se, a threat against the life of our people. The Episcopal Conference also rejected the government's manipulation regarding the concept of national sovereignty and the radical positions of some government officials.

CCN Rejects Noriega Talks; More on Church Stand

PA2404233088 Paris AFP in Spanish 2218 GMT 24 Apr 88

[Text] Panama City, 24 Apr (AFP)—Today the opposition National Civilian Crusade [CCN] broke almost 3 weeks of silence to emphatically reject any possibility of direct negotiations with General Manuel Antonio Noriega and to announce new protest demonstrations for this week.

Tomas Herrera, coordinator of the Crusade, said that talks with the controversial Panamanian military chief are impossible because "one of our preconditions for resolving the country's crisis is that Gen Noriega go" into exile.

Herrera's statement contrasted with a declaration of the Panamanian Episcopal Conference, read this Sunday in all of the country's churches, in which the bishops urge all sectors to promote an open and sincere dialogue to resolve the present crisis.

After rejecting any possibility for talks between the Crusade and the country's strongman, Herrera announced that on 28 April the Crusade will begin a new campaign of protests "against communism and Noriega."

In a communique made public today, the Crusade called on all opponents to demonstrate next (?Thursday) to repudiate the apparent "advance of the Panamanian left in government positions."

In this fashion the Civic Crusade called on all Panamanians to participate in a so-called "white action" to renew pressure against Gen Noriega, whose removal from the leadership of the Defense Forces has been demanded by the internal opposition for the last 10 months.

The Crusade threats come after 3 weeks of relative calm, which was interpreted as a "truce" to facilitate presumed secret negotiations between the opposition and government representatives.

Nevertheless, these negotiations appeared to have not prospered due to the reciprocal intransigence on both sides, an attitude that was harshly criticized by the 11 bishops that make up the Panamanian Episcopal Conference in their pastoral letter read to all Catholics attending church this Sunday.

"What is most serious," said the bishops, "is that there is no resolution in sight, nor is there any properly integrated dialogue."

The episcopal declaration recognized the merits of the Civic Crusade in its struggle to reestablish democracy in Panama, but warned that "its intransigence to hold talks" has turned into another factor that aggravates the crisis.

The Panamanian bishops pointed out that the most serious cause of the political crisis is "the de facto military dictatorship" that has existed in the country for many years, which manifests itself in "the military predominance (that exists) in almost all walks of the national life."

In spite of recognizing the seriousness of the situation, the Episcopal Conference considered the economic sanctions imposed by the United States on Panama as "unjust and violations of the national sovereignty" in the U.S. effort to expel Gen Manuel Antonio Noriega from power.

These sanctions "are morally unjust" and we "demand that they be suspended immediately," emphasized the bishop's declaration. It added that the United States has "dealt a harsh blow against the (Panamanian) people, especially the poorest and most humble sectors."

In the midst of the new opposition threats and this appeal "for good sense" by the church, this Sunday President Manuel Solis Palma continued evaluating the possibility of reorganizing his cabinet.

The cabinet in full resigned last Friday, but President Solis has so far neither accepted nor rejected any of the resignations, although it is being speculated that he will announce a "war cabinet" to face the growing difficulties of his government, especially the economic problems.

Foreign Ministry Raps U.S. Officials' Visits

PA2304184088 Panama City Domestic Service in Spanish 1702 GMT 23 Apr 88

[Communique issued by the Foreign Ministry in Panama City on 23 April]

[Text] The Panamanian Foreign Ministry expresses its deep concern over the new actions conducted by the main supporters of the U.S. aggressive policy against Panama to try to obtain a Latin American consensus and legitimize a direct U.S. military intervention in Panama.

Because of the evident frustration in several government sectors in Washington, caused by the Panamanian peoples' unbreakable will to decide their fate with full sovereignty and by rejecting foreign intervention, the U.S. Administration has increased its political and economic pressures on the Latin American governments to isolate Panama politically and diplomatically and consequently break Latin American solidarity before foreign intervention.

The Panamanian Foreign Ministry reports that behavior as well as the frequent visits of U.S. special envoys to the region, who come here to convince Latin American leaders of the feasibility of a collective action against Panama, ignoring the reactions of U.S. public opinion, which views this aggression as an unfortunate military adventure in Latin America.

The threats of a military intervention expressed by Ambassador Vernon Walters—attempting to carry out a collective action against Panama in a useless attempt to rescue a failed foreign policy—seriously undermine the efforts made by the Panamanian Government to try to find a solution to the Panamanian crisis through authentic Panamanian solutions and without foreign interference.

The Panamanian Foreign Ministry vigorously condemns this new interventionist maneuver, which violates the basic norms of international legal order as well as the OAS and UN Charters, and uses this suitable occasion to express the Panamanian people's and government's deep gratitude for the solidarity received from the Latin American and Caribbean brother peoples and governments.

Panama City, 23 April 1988

Argentina

Spokesman Denies Report on Alfonsin Resignation

PY242036 Buenos Aires TELAM in Spanish 1455 GMT 24 Apr 88

[Text] Buenos Aires, 24 Apr (TELAM)—Presidential spokesman Jose Ignacio Lopez has strongly denied a report published today by the Tucuman morning newspaper LA GACETA that President Raul Alfonsin and Vice President Victor Martinez had agreed with Buenos Aires Governor Antonio Cafiero to resign in order to advance the date of the presidential elections.

It is science fiction and a foolish idea, Lopez said during a brief visit to his office on his way to the Olivos presidential residence, from which he will accompany President Alfonsin to a luncheon at the Asturian Center in Vicente Lopez.

Brazil

Sarney Requests Indictment of Bresser

PY221416 Brasilia Radio nacional da Amazonia Network in Portuguese 1000 GMT 22 Apr 88

[Text] Civil Household Chief Costa Couto and Housing and Urban Affairs Minister Prisco Viana have confirmed that the federal government is studying a way to sue former Finance Minister Bresser Pereira for slander and offense.

President Jose Sarney felt that Bresser Pereira's charges made during his questioning at the Commission for Congressional Investigation sessions that are checking the disbursement of Planning Ministry funds during former Minister Anibal Teixeira's administration were offensive to his honor. Sarney thus requested the judicial branch to indict the former finance minister.

Ecuador

Officials, Politicians Reject Abrams' Remarks

PA2304024888 Paris AFP in Spanish 2242 GMT 22 Apr 88

[Excerpts] Quito, 22 Apr (AFP)—Today Ecuador criticized statements by Elliott Abrams, U.S. assistant secretary of state for inter-American affairs, as "undue interference" in its affairs. Abrams said in Buenos Aires that coups might take place in Ecuador and Peru.

According to a report that originated in Buenos Aires while Abrams was there, on Wednesday the U.S. official warned of the danger of coups in Ecuador and Peru. The statements caused an uproar when they were published here yesterday.

The U.S. Embassy delivered a note to the Foreign Ministry in Quito and to the press containing the text of the statements made by Abrams.

Jaime Marchan, Foreign Ministry political undersecretary, acknowledged receipt of the note to Robert Morley, acting charge d'affaires of the U.S. Embassy, in a return note rejecting Abrams' comments.

"Ecuador is very sensitive to statements that violate the principle of nonintervention, and Ecuadoreans—the government, political parties, and the public in general—with the same fervor that we defend the country's democratic stability, reject on principle any expression that is, or could be construed as, undue interference in affairs that are exclusively within our purview," Marchan said to Morley in his note, released here today. [passage omitted]

For his part, Foreign Minister Rafael Garcia noted that the country is engaged in a democratic electoral process, and he added: "We are sensitive to attitudes that, going beyond a supportive regional concern, could constitute undue interference. Such attitudes cannot be accepted, by virtue of our unyielding position of principle."

In turn, Government Minister Heinz Moeller described Abrams' statements as "impertinent," and he said: "Once again, rumors of the type spread by Abrams are damaging the democratic process."

There was a similar reaction to Abrams' comments from other state officials, legislators, and political party leaders. [passage omitted]

Paraguay

Rubin Says Meeting With Walters 'Unpleasant'

PY232334 Asuncion ULTIMA HORA in Spanish 23 Apr 88 p 8

[Text] Regarding the meeting yesterday between Paraguayan opposition leaders and Ambassador Vernon Walters, the U.S. representative to the United Nations, Radio Nanduti Director Humberto Rubin said: "Unfortunately, it was very unpleasant. At least that was my impression. I argued forcefully with him, because he kept twisting everything around. We are accustomed to Abrams, State Department people, officials who use language we have been used to hearing from the United States for some time, and then this ambassador comes along and—probably because of the diplomatic position he occupies—begins making comparisons.

"We could not talk with him about anything. His theme was anti-Americanism. He spoke to us about Panama, Nicaragua, and the Persian Gulf, which had nothing to do with what we were telling him. It was an awful discussion. We would say white, he would say black; we would say day, he would say night. At the beginning of the meeting, [Director of the government-closed daily

ABC COLOR Aldo] Zucolillo made a joke because Walters just came in and said: 'Okay, talk to me,' as if to say: 'I only have an hour with you, and this is the third opposition group I have met with.' I just did not understand this. Several people spoke—[Carmen de] Lara Castro, De Vargas—and Walters disagreed with everything. He did not like anything—not anything they said. He would not accept anything.

"Then I said to him: 'But Mr Ambassador, you seem very nervous, you need to calm down, you are very tense, you are in no condition to meet with anyone.' Walters stood up and said: 'No one has ever offended me in my life. In 40 years as an ambassador I have never been attacked like this. This meeting is over.' Then U.S. Ambassador Taylor looked at him; they sat down again and the conversation continued. His language was not the kind of coherent language we are used to hearing.

"He also said an intervention had been requested. We told him no, we Paraguayans are going to resolve our own problems. No one is asking for the 6th Fleet or anything of the kind. Then he said that we were meeting him here, and under other regimes this would not be possible. We are meeting even though this man does not like it, he said, referring to me. I think this ambassador came here feeling tense about the Persian Gulf, tense about Panama, and he has lumped all the problems together. In other words, he is confusing Paraguay with the Persian Gulf, or perhaps Nicaragua."

Laino on 'Cordial' Meeting

PY242134 Asuncion ULTIMA HORA in Spanish 23 Apr 88 p 8

[Quotation marks as published]

[Text] Domingo Laino, president of the Authentic Radical Liberal Party, PLRA, has disclosed some of the details of the meeting he held with the U.S. Ambassador to the United Nations General Vernon Walters, retired. Laino said: "We had a very cordial, fraternal meeting. We talked at length about matters in general.

The distinguished guest told us that this was just one of his visits to Paraguay because he was here 12 years ago and at that time no one in this country was talking about the possibility of changes in the political course of the nation.

Walters stressed that now, however, he has heard people talking about transition and democracy," Laino said. He had gone to the meeting at the U.S. Embassy, along with Euclides Acevedo, president of the Febrerista Revolutionary Party, PRF. The two leaders were representing the National Accord.

The talk that the opposition leaders held with Walters also dealt with the latter's meeting with the Paraguayan president. He told us that it was not his habit to reveal what had been discussed at high levels, that even in his books he did not describe his contacts with prominent figures of other countries.

Laino added: "However, Walters led us to understand that he had discussed with the president matters related to the entire spectrum of national politics. It was a lengthy private talk. In any case, we believe that this direct contact with this prominent ambassador of the United States is very important, very positive. He was very cordial with all of us.

Asked whether they conveyed certain concerns of the opposition to Walters, Laino answered: "We went to talk with an important figure of the United States, undoubtedly one of the most influential countries not only of the West but of the entire world. Therefore, it was the right opportunity to exchange opinions. We told him that we obviously do not want any other country to interfere with Paraguayan domestic affairs. We also told him what we usually tell the people at large. Together with Acevedo, we advocate a nonviolent, nontraumatic transition, without any outbursts. This is the desire of the nation's opposition as a whole."

Laino added: "We were able to tell Walters that the democratic parties are gaining strength all the time and that we are very optimistic about Paraguay's future; that we have confidence in broad sectors of the Armed Forces, which are capable of raising the banner of a constitutionally proper military institution."

He stressed: "We also priased the attitude of the Catholic Church toward the national dialogue launched last year and its current questioning of corruption and defense of moral standards. In sum, it was a very cordial, very open, and very fraternal talk."

Peru

Government Rejects Abrams' Remarks on Coup

PY230140 Lima Television Peruana in Spanish 0120 GMT 23 Apr 88

[Text] In an official Foreign Ministry communique, Peru has requested an explanation for a statement by a U.S. Government official. The communique reads:

The Foreign Ministry hereby informs the public that it has lodged a protest with and requested an explanation from the U.S. charge d'affaires regarding a statement in Buenos Aires 2 days ago by Elliott Abrams, the U.S. deputy [as heard] assistant secretary of state for Inter-American affairs, that there is a threat of a coup in Peru. In addition to being intrinsically erroneous, this statement represents inadmissible intervention in Peruvian affairs and, therefore, deserves to be energically rejected.

Barco Arrives for Meeting With Garcia

PY242044 Madrid EFE in Spanish 1718 GMT 24 Apr 88

[Text] Caballococha (Peru), 24 Apr (EFE)—Today Colombian President Virgilio Barco and Peruvian President Alan Garcia arrived in the Peruvian Amazon town of Caballococha, near the border between the two countries. The two leaders will hold a meeting nearby.

Barco arrived in a Colombian Air Force plane 20 minutes after his Peruvian counterpart, who arrived at 1010 (1510 GMT), also in a military plane.

The two presidents exchanged greetings and then listened to the national anthems of the two countries and reviewed a military formation from a podium.

Caballococha is a small town in Loreto Department about 450 km from Iquitos, capital of Amazonas Department. This is the first visit by chief executives to Loreto.

After the airport ceremony, Barco and Garcia borded the Peruvian Navy gunboat "Ucayali," which headed for the site of the meeting, a point in the Amazon River midway between San Antonio, Peru, and Narino, Colombia.

The Colombian president plans to leave Caballococha to return to his country at about 1530 Peruvian time.

Garcia Meets With Cuban Vice President

PY222044 Lima Television Peruana in Spanish 1800 GMT 22 Apr 88

[Report by Luis Sotomayor from Government Palace]

[Text] At noon today President Alan Garcia Perez met privately with Cuban Vice President Carlos Rafael Rodriguez, who is on his way to Brazil, where he will attend an ECLA meeting marking the organization's 40th anniversary and a seminar on the foreign debt.

Bilateral relations between Peru and Cuba; the Central American crisis; and the foreign debt, on which Cuba and Peru share similar views, were reportedly the subjects discussed during the meeting.

The Cuban vice president left Government Palace at approximately 1300. He was accompanied to the front door by President Alan Garcia Perez.